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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Botswana*, Lesotho, Namibia*, South Africa*, Swaziland*, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia*: draft resolution

Women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Recognizing that women play a vital role in the social and economic development of their countries and therefore profoundly concerned by the fact that out of 36.1 million people living with human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) today, women now represent about half of all people over age fifteen living with HIV and AIDS,

Noting with great concern that the proportion of women becoming infected with HIV is growing in every region, that in sub-Saharan Africa the majority of those living with HIV are women and that, in the younger age brackets (fifteen to twenty-four years of age), girls are at higher risk of HIV infection and more girls than boys are now infected,

Mindful that the majority of women and the girl child in most developing countries do not enjoy full social and economic rights, such as education, health care and welfare, that these inequalities begin early in life and render women and the girl child unable to protect their sexual and reproductive health, thus increasing their risk and vulnerability to HIV infection, and that they therefore suffer disproportionately from the consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic,

* In accordance with rule 69 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

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Recognizing that poverty, negative cultural practices and the subordinate status of women in the household, community and society render women especially vulnerable to HIV/sexually transmitted infections,

Recognizing also that women, in particular young girls, are physiologically and biologically more vulnerable than men to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and yet lack access to, and/or receive, minimal health care and support when infected,

Noting with concern the link and decreased attention to sexually transmitted infections which increase the risk of transmission of HIV in women and girls,

Noting also with concern that approximately 80 per cent of infected women have been infected through unprotected sex with an infected male partner, and acknowledging, therefore, that men have a shared responsibility towards protecting their own and women's sexual health,

Acknowledging that millions of women do not have access to means that have proved effective in preventing infection, lowering infection rates and improving the quality of life, such as male and female condoms, affordable anti-retroviral drugs, relevant preventive education, acceptable counselling and testing services,

Noting the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa and the efforts of the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS) and its co-sponsoring organizations, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank, to empower women through capacity development programmes, as well as programmes that provide women with access to development resources and strengthen their networks that offer care and support to women affected by HIV/AIDS,

1. *Welcomes* the decision to convene the Organization of African Unity Special Summit on HIV/AIDS in Abuja, Nigeria, in April 2001, and the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in June 2001;

2. *Reaffirms* the commitment to the HIV/AIDS goals and objectives contained in the political declaration[1] and further actions and initiatives[2] to implement the Beijing Declaration[3] and the Platform for Action,[4] as adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century";

3. *Also reaffirms* the rights of women and the girl child infected and affected by HIV/AIDS/sexually transmitted infections to have access to health, education and social services and to be protected from all forms of discrimination, stigma, abuse and neglect;

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[1] General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex.

[2] General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

[3] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[4] Ibid., annex II.

4. *Further reaffirms* the human rights of girls and women to equal access to education, skills training and employment opportunities as a means to reduce their vulnerability to HIV and sexually transmitted infections;

5. *Urges* Governments to take all necessary measures to empower women and strengthen women's economic independence and to protect and promote their human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to allow them to better protect themselves from HIV/sexually transmitted infections;

6. *Stresses* that every effort should be made by Governments, relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, individually and collectively, to place combating HIV/AIDS as a priority in the development agenda and to implement effective prevention strategies and programmes, especially for the most vulnerable populations, including women, young girls and infants, also taking into account prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV;

7. *Calls upon* the international community, relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify their support of national efforts against HIV/AIDS, including efforts at providing affordable anti-retroviral drugs, particularly in favour of women and young girls, in the worst-hit regions in Africa and where the epidemic is severely setting back national development gains;

8. *Urges* Governments to take steps to create an environment that promotes compassion and support for people infected/affected by HIV/AIDS, to provide the legal framework that will protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, to enable those who are vulnerable to have access to appropriate voluntary counselling services and to encourage efforts to reduce discrimination and stigmatization;

9. *Urges* Governments, with the assistance of relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to create an environment and conditions that will take care of and support children orphaned by AIDS;

10. *Encourages* Governments to recognize the challenges facing girls and women, particularly older women, who are primary caregivers for people living with HIV/AIDS, and to provide them with the necessary economic and psychosocial support;

11. *Urges* Governments, with the assistance of relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, to adopt a long-term, timely, coherent and integrated AIDS prevention policy, with public information and life skills-based education programmes specifically tailored to the needs of women and girls within their sociocultural contexts and sensitivities and the specific needs in their life cycle;

12. *Encourages* Governments and civil society to support women's groups and community organizations in changing harmful traditions and practices affecting the health of women and girls and to take steps to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including rape and sexual coercion, which aggravate the conditions fostering the spread of the epidemic;

13. *Encourages* accelerated research on vaccine development and intensified additional research on promoting the female condom, microbicides and other

options that offer women more control over the protection of their reproductive sexual health;

14. *Requests* Governments to provide comprehensive health care for women and girls with HIV, including treatment for opportunistic diseases and reproductive health services, and also ensure that condoms and treatment for sexually transmitted infections are affordable and available in places accessible to women while ensuring their privacy;

15. *Urges* Governments and networks to continue advocating, lobbying and entering into negotiations with multinational drug companies for a drastic reduction in the market prices of HIV/AIDS-related drugs and diagnostics to ensure their availability to women and girls living with HIV/AIDS;

16. *Welcomes* the efforts at coordination by the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS) and the efforts in promoting sexual and reproductive health education for young people, in particular girls, while encouraging them to delay sexual initiation and, in this context, urges that greater attention be given to the education of men and boys about their roles and their responsibilities in preventing the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, to their partners;

17. *Requests* the Joint United Nations Programmes on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS) and its co-sponsors, bilateral and multilateral donors and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in their efforts to prevent HIV infection, to give urgent and priority attention to the situation of women and girls in Africa;

18. *Invites* the relevant entities of the United Nations system, including agencies, funds and programmes, to mainstream gender policies and programmes integrating HIV/AIDS activities;

19. *Takes note with appreciation* of section I on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS of the report of the Secretary-General[5] on thematic issues before the Commission on the Status of Women, and invites the Secretary-General to report to the Commission at its forty-sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

[5] E/CN.6/2001/9.